

ELDER MALTREATMENT AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO REDUCE ELDER MALTREATMENT

WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE/MALTREATMENT?

Elder abuse is an intentional act or failure to act that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult. An older adult is someone age 60 or older. The abuse occurs at the hands of a caregiver or a person the elder trusts. Common types of elder abuse include:

- **Physical abuse** is when an elder experiences illness, pain, injury, functional impairment, distress, or death as a result of the intentional use of physical force and includes acts such as hitting, kicking, pushing, slapping, and burning.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forced or unwanted sexual interaction of any kind with an older adult. This may include unwanted sexual contact or penetration or non-contact acts such as sexual harassment.
- **Emotional or Psychological Abuse** refers to verbal or nonverbal behaviors that inflict anguish, mental pain, fear, or distress on an older adult. Examples include humiliation or disrespect, verbal and non-verbal threats, harassment, and geographic or interpersonal isolation.
- **Neglect** is the failure to meet an older adult's basic needs. These needs include food, water, shelter, clothing, hygiene, and essential medical care.
- **Exploitation** is the act or process of taking advantage of an elderly person, whether for monetary or personal gain.
- **Abandonment** refers to the desertion or willful forsaking of an elderly person by a caretaker or the foregoing duties, or the withdrawal or neglect of duties and obligations owed an elderly person by a caretaker or other person.
- **Financial Abuse** is the illegal, unauthorized, or improper use of an elder's money, benefits, belongings, property, or assets for the benefit of someone other than the older adult.

Source: [Preventing Elder Abuse / Violence Prevention / Injury Center / CDC](#)

HOW COMMON IS ELDER ABUSE/MALTREATMENT?

Elder abuse is common and on the rise. Nationally, about 1 in 10 people aged 60 and older experienced abuse, exploitation, neglect and/or abandonment. In Connecticut, according to a [performance audit by the state Auditors of Public Accounts](#) from 2016 to 2019, the number of state investigations into complaints of elder abuse increased by 29%.

Source: [State audit raises concerns about investigations of elder abuse in Connecticut - Hartford Courant](#)

HOW TO PREVENT ELDER ABUSE/MALTREATMENT:

To prevent elder abuse, understanding the risk factors that put people at risk for or protect them from violence is important:

Individual Risk Factors

- Current diagnosis of mental illness
- Current or past abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Current physical health problem
- Past experience of disruptive behavior
- Past experience of traumatic events

- High levels of stress
- Poor or inadequate preparation or training for caregiving responsibilities
- Inadequate coping skills
- Exposure to or witnessing abuse as a child
- Social isolation

Relationship Risk Factors

- High financial and emotional dependence upon a vulnerable elder
- Past family conflict
- Inability to establish or maintain positive prosocial relationships
- Lack of social support

Societal Risk Factors

There are specific characteristics of institutional settings such as nursing homes and residential facilities, that can increase the risk for perpetration including:

- Staffing problems and lack of qualified staff
- Staff burnout and stressful working conditions

Source: [Risk and Protective Factors/Elder Abuse/Violence Prevention/Injury Center/CDC](#)

STEPS TO TAKE FOR PREVENTION:

- Listen to older adults and their caregivers to understand their challenges and provide support.
- Report abuse or suspected abuse to local adult protective services, long-term care ombudsman, or the police. Use the following numbers in CT:
 - During Business Hours: In-State: 1-888-385-4225 (Toll Free)
 - Out of State: 1-800-203-1234 (Toll Free)
 - After Hour Emergencies: In-State: 2-1-1 (Toll Free)
 - Out of State: 1-800-203-1234 (Toll Free)
- Educate oneself and others about how to recognize and report elder abuse.
- Learn how the signs of elder abuse differ from the normal aging process.
- Check-in on older adults who may have few friends and family members.
- Provide over-burdened caregivers with support such as help from friends, family, or local relief care groups; adult day care programs; counseling; outlets intended to promote emotional well-being.
- Encourage and assist persons (either caregivers or older adults) having problems with drug or alcohol abuse in getting help.

MANDATED REPORTING

[According to Connecticut Law](#), mandated reporters are generally anyone paid to care for older adults in any capacity such as: licensed or unlicensed professionals, physicians, surgeons, interns, nurses, patients' advocates (excluding the Long Term Care Ombudsman staff and volunteers), medical examiners, dentists, optometrists, chiropractors, podiatrists, social workers, clergymen, police officers, pharmacists, psychologists, physical therapists, nursing home staff, emergency medical personnel, and any person paid for caring for an older adult by any institution, organization, agency or facility such as homemakers or companions. [For the complete list click here.](#)

Mandated reporters are required to report suspected elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation or abandonment. They must alert the appropriate parties (note: hyperlink "appropriate parties" back to the "make a report" section) of their suspicion within 72 hours after the suspicion or belief arouse. Failure to do so can result in fines up to \$500 and misdemeanor charges. [Chapter 319dd - Protective Services for the Elderly](#)

It is not the role of a mandated reporter to **verify that abuse** is occurring, only to **alert** others of your suspicions. Reporters may remain anonymous and cannot be held liable in civil or criminal court when reports are made in good faith.

ELDER JUSTICE HOTLINE: 1- 860-808-5555

The **Attorney General's Office**, in cooperation with the **Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut** (elderjusticect.org), has launched the **Elder Justice Hotline** as a new resource to help older adults in Connecticut seek information, assistance, and justice.

- The **Elder Justice Hotline** is intended as an additional resource offered to connect individuals seeking information to the appropriate state agencies.
- The Coalition of Elder Justice in CT (CEJC) is a multi-disciplinary, statewide group of private and public stakeholders working together to prevent elder abuse and protect the rights, independence, security, and well-being of vulnerable elders." <https://elderjusticect.org>
- The **Elder Justice Hotline does not** investigate reports of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. Reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation received through the Hotline will be referred to the [Protective Services for the Elderly at the Department of Social Services](#).
- Individuals may also report such complaints directly by calling **1-888-385-4225** (during regular business hours) or to **Infoline** at **211** after hours, weekend and state holidays. If calling from outside Connecticut, call Infoline at 211 or call 1-800-203-1234.

RESOURCES:

CT LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM: The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program protects the health, safety, well-being and rights of individuals who reside in skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes and assisted living facilities. <https://portal.ct.gov/LTCOP>

PROTECTIVE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY PROGRAM: The Protective Services for the Elderly Program is administered by the Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Social-Work-Services/Social-Work-Services/Related-Resources>

- **Description of Program:** DSS workers investigate reports of known or suspected physical, mental and emotional abuse, neglect and abandonment and/or financial abuse and exploitation of adults ages 60+ who are living in the community or in long term care facilities.
- A DSS worker meets with the elderly person and his or her family to determine unmet needs and develop a comprehensive plan to address those needs. When necessary, staff will intervene immediately to safeguard the individual's health and well-being.
- Additional information on how to report elder abuse can be found at Protective Services for the Elderly - Related Resources at the Connecticut Department of Social Services <https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/Social-Work-Services/Social-Work-Services/Related-Resources>

TO FIND LOCATIONS OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY PROVIDERS IN CONNECTICUT'S COMMUNITY RESOURCES DATABASE:

Search by program name (CT location) in Protective Services for the Elderly. Follow this link to the Protective Services for the Elderly pamphlet. - [\(Spanish version\)](#)[\(English version\)](#) - [\(Spanish version\)](#)

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES

Mission is to maximize opportunities for the independence and well-being of people with disabilities and older adults in Connecticut. Their programs, policies and practices are designed to:

- Deliver integrated aging and disability services responsive to the needs of Connecticut citizens;
- Provide leadership on aging and disability issues statewide;
- Provide and coordinate aging and disability programs and services in the areas of employment, education, independent living, accessibility and advocacy;
- Advocate for the rights of Connecticut residents with disabilities and older adults; and
- Serve as a resource on aging and disability issues at the state level

CT AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

Area Agencies on Aging are private, nonprofit planning agencies, each guided by its own Board of Directors and Advisory Council. Through funding provided by the State Department of Aging and Disability Services, each AAA receives Federal Older Americans Act (Title III) funds and State funds that are allocated to elderly service providers through a request for proposal process. AAAs fund the following services:

- Social Services
- Nutritional Services
- Disease Prevention & Health Promotion Services
- Family Caregivers Support Services
- Adult Day Care Aide Positions (to provide day care services to victims of Alzheimer's Disease and related dementia)

- The five AAAs, located on the website, may also provide direct services in the areas of community education, advocacy, case management, information and assistance, benefits counseling and training.

HEALTHY CONNECTICUT LIVING COLLECTIVE: <https://cthealthyliving.org/>

The Connecticut Healthy Living Collective (CHLC) is comprised of state, regional and local agencies and organizations dedicated to healthy aging in communities throughout our state, and to providing leadership and visibility for the challenges and opportunities faced by Connecticut's growing aging population.